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I DON'T THINK I WOULD



















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MASSACRE MEADOW

THREE HORSEMEN, wearing full-feathsered headdress, sat motionless on the bluff overlooking Massacre Meadow. Far below them a covered wagon train made its way through the flatland. It moved slowly like a lary snake.

lawy snake. From a distance, the men appeared to be Indians. They were garbed as Indians and their tanned skin would hardly give them away. But they were white men and they were up to no good!

"Long train, Pete," said one. "If we could take them all it would be a good haul."

"Don't be greedy," growled Pete, evidently the leader of the threesome. "Don't bite off more than you can chaw. Those farmers are mighty handy with a shotgun."

mighty handy with a shotgun."
"What're we going to do? Wait around and

hope it rains gold?" grumbled the first speaker. "Batton you inl, Smoky!" growded Pete. "If you don't like my way of running this show, you're plum beatcome to go down and tackle those sodbusters all by your lonstome. As for ms. I aim to wait till one of the wagons breaks down and gees separated from the head. Then I'll move in and get me enough loot to keep me satisfied for a long while."

"How do you know you can get anything worthwhile from one wagon?" asked Smoky.

"Stands to reason," responded Pets. "They're all farmers, aren't they? They're heading for New City to put in claims for homesteads when the government claims office opens. Wherever they come from back east, they've pulled up stakes and brought everything they own along with them. Doesn't that make semse?"

"Yes," agreed Smoky, and the third man nodded.

"Well," continued Pete, "farmers are thrifty types. They work hard, they raise a family, they save money. They don't go blowing a month's pay for one night of whoopee in town the way the saddlebums do around here. I'll bet each one of those wagons is a little bank all by itself. If we're patieht, we can take over one of those banks!"

To David Tolliver's wagon was the last in the train. He sat in the driver's seat holding the reins, with his pretty young wife, Matilda, beside him. The wagon rocked and creaked over the rough terrain. It was a pretty ramshackle wagon, but David had allowed as how it would get him to his destination.

As they rode, his face broke into a grin. He pointed ahead to one side and said, "Look, there's your brother. He's supposed to be an outrider—a guard of this train. But he's got his nose in a book as usual. When he's reading, somebody could steal his breeches and he'd newer notice."

never notice."

Buddy's horse had stopped to graze, and
David Tolliver's wagon was moving up along-

side. "Hey, Buddy!" yelled Tolliver.

The reader was so startled he nearly fell off his mount. After regaining his balance, he turned a good-natured grin toward his sister and her husband. "This is so interesting I completely forgot where I was," he said.

"Well, you'd better start remembering," snapped Matilda. "The whole train nearly passed you by—and you're supposed to be an alert suard."

"Oh, there's no danger here," responded Buddy.

Buddy.

"No danger? In a place called Massacre Valley?" His sister was plainly disgusted with his

attitude.

Buddy opened his mouth to reply but was interrupted by a loud Bang! His horse shied and half-threw him. Only by clutching the saddlehorn was he able to keen from falling. The wagon lurched and sagged, then settled erazily on three wheels and a hub cap as David Tolliver pulled strong on the reins and urged the team to halt. The left hind wheel had broken down beyond all repair!

The wagon train halted. Tolliver hastily consulted with the others. There was no spare wheel, no way he could get bis wagon moving until somebody rode on to town and found a wheelwright. David told them, "You all go ahead. I'll stay here with my stuff. If the rest of you delay, you'll be too late to put in your claims. If you go on, you'll make it in time and

maybe somebody can put in a claim for me."

Matilda insisted on staying with her husband, and no amount of persuasion would make her change her mind. And then, to the surprise

of most, Buddy volunteered to stay with the stranded wagon, too.

Dusk had fallen. Buddy was still in the saddle, trying deeperately to finish his book before darkness shut off his vision. Matilida was busy preparing supper and David had just returned. from ground-hitching his team in a rich grassy spot near a spring. The rest of the wagon team had long since disappeared from sight to the west. The evening was utterly still, with not a breeze stirring.

Suddenly the stillness was broken by the clatter of horses galloping down from the bluff. There were wild war whoops and a thunder of shors. David looked up and exclaimed, "Indianst" and dived for his shorgun. Matilda screamed as she saw them coming; there riders in full Indian headdress bearing down on them out of the shadows.

David raised his shotgun and fired once. Then a searing alug cut through his head and he collapsed on his face. Just before she fainted, Matilda saw one thing that turned her heart to lee. She saw Buddy riding away in the opposite direction, as fast as his horse could gallop.

"This is real easy pickings!" chuckled Pete as he pushed the Indian feathers back from his head and started rifling the contents of the wagon.

When David Tolliver and Matilda were re-

united with the rest of the wagon train party in New City, David took the robbery shilos ophically. "I thank heaven I escaped with only a scalp wound," he said. "I'd rather have my life than my money." But Matlida was bitter, "I knew my brother

But Matlida was bitter. "I knew my brother was lary and spent all his time with his nose in a book, but I didn't think he was a coward! He ran away! Left us both to be scalped by those redskins! I disown him! I'll never speak to him again!"

A voice suddenly broke in, and all the homesteaders looked up, surprised. It was Buddy. He rode into the circle by the firelight, ushering Pete and his two pards ahead of him. The three sullen ortlaws had their hands raised and Buddy wes holding a gun on them.

"Those are kind of harsh words, Sis." said Buddy. "Especially considering that I caught the three men who held us up and recovered all the stuff they stole."

"Those men aren't Indians!"

"I know. But they pretended to be. And they thought their disguise was so safe that they were careless enough for me to be able to trail them easily and get the jump on them. By the way, I didn't run away. My horse did. I couldn't hold him back. You know I've never been a very good horseman, anyway!"

Tears streamed down Matilda's cheeks.
"Buddy, I'm sorry I doubted you. But howhow did you know these men weren't Indians. They looked like Indians!"

Eth. hey did." said Buddy, But-well, I fands throw for port contend, but I read a lot. I've been reading about this new territory. For instance, I read that Massacre Meadow was named for something that happened fifty years ago. These days, the Indiana around here are friendly as pic. And when I saw horselson marks around the wayon. I knew we'd been attacked by white men. That's something clast I read—but findian points don't

Matilda looked at him with admiration.
"Buddy, I'm sure glad you learned to read!"
"Amen!" chorused the other settlers.

THE PART





















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